

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

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August 10, 1999

Lester Snow
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
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Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Recreation Considerations

Dear Mr. Snow,

This joint letter from the Delta Protection Commission and the Department of Boating and Waterways is in response to your letter dated May 13, 1999, in which you requested assistance in addressing recreation issues and impacts related to the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. As an initial effort, we have identified recreation needs, described ongoing planning projects, discussed opportunities for integrating recreation and public access into the CALFED Program, and outlined current Department of Boating and Waterways programs which could be utilized for recreation improvements in the Delta.

Existing Recreation Facilities in the Delta Area

As part of a larger study, in 1997, the Delta Protection Commission released an inventory of existing public and private recreation facilities and public access in, and directly adjacent to, the Delta Primary Zone (Inventory of Recreational Facilities, Revised November 1997). The inventory lists the various boat launching facilities, camping and picnic sites, fishing access locations, historic sites, hunting areas, marinas, pumpout locations, trails and paths, and windsurfing areas within the Delta. For additional information, the inventory is available on the Commission's Web site: www.delta.ca.gov.

Recreation Needs

The Department of Boating and Waterways and the Delta Protection Commission retained the Department of Parks and Recreation to inventory the recreational facilities in the Delta (Inventory of Recreational Facilities, Revised November 1997) and to conduct a survey of registered boat owners and licensed anglers who use the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for recreation (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Recreation Survey, August 1997). The purpose of these studies was to determine the number of boaters and anglers who use the Delta, the areas where they recreate, the activities in which they participate, and the amount of money they spend while recreating in the Delta.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Recreation Survey determined the level of satisfaction with the Delta's current recreation facilities. The facilities that were most consistently deemed "somewhat inadequate" or "very inadequate" by boaters and anglers are public restrooms, swimming beaches, bicycle trails, fishing piers and other fishing access, courtesy docks, sewage pumpout facilities, hunting areas, and fish cleaning stations.

Boating and Waterways' Ongoing Studies, Programs, and Funding Sources

Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) is funding various studies related to recreation in the Delta. A Boating Traffic Study is being conducted by the University of Southern California for DBW to document recreational boat use of various waterways in the Delta. Also, a Boating Needs Assessment will be conducted over the next year for DBW by the Metropolitan Water District. This study will gather user data, determine baseline conditions of boating and related recreation and develop a facilities needs assessment.

The Department of Boating and Waterways has several grant programs that could be utilized in conjunction with the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. DBW programs can fund improvements such as marinas, boat launching facilities, floating restrooms, vessel pumpout equipment, kayak/canoe launch sites, and visitor dock development; in addition, DBW has the authority to acquire property for boating purposes. The programs are described below.

- **The Local Assistance Boat Launching Facility Grant Program** can be utilized to provide launching ramps, boarding floats, float guidance systems, restrooms, parking areas, shoreline protection, drainage, lighting, landscaping, irrigation, signs, and amenities. A local sponsor is required to own or control the project property, have landside and waterside access to and from the property, and enter into a 20-year commitment to operate and maintain the facilities.
- **The S.S. Relief – Floating Restroom Grant Program** is used to provide restroom facilities at locations where shoreside facilities cannot be provided. The program includes floating restrooms, special trailers for land transport of the restrooms, and ground tackle to moor and anchor them at specific locations. Local sponsors are required to enter into a ten-year commitment to operate and maintain the floating restrooms, trailers and anchoring hardware, and to pump, transport and properly dispose of collected sewage. This 25-year-old grant program has been of significant importance in reducing pollution and improving water quality in local water bodies throughout California.
- **The Clean Vessel Grant Program** is used to fund sewage pumpout facilities, and educate California boaters as to how to responsibly enjoy the State's waterways. This is the only program under which grants may be made to private entities that own and operate private marinas, harbors and/or other waterfront boating facilities. Grant recipients are required to enter into a five-year commitment to operate and maintain the facilities, including proper disposal of sewage collected. As with the floating restroom program, this seven-year-old grant program has had a positive impact on the improvement of water quality in California waterways, both coastal and inland.

- The **Boating Trails Grant Program** provides grants primarily for non-power boating access to rivers, lakes, bays and streams. Both put-in and take-out facilities may be developed including restrooms, parking and amenities. The Department is particularly interested in developing a Delta Boating Trails system for canoes, kayaks and other paddle craft.
- The **Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIG-P)**, a new federally funded grant program that will begin in late 1999, will focus on transient dock facilities for powerboats over 26 feet long. It will be a competitive grant program and the Department intends to submit a proposal that includes transient docking facilities at appropriate locations in the Delta. An example of such a facility is the new public boat landing in Walnut Grove that went into service in June 1999. This could easily develop into a "boating trails" program for powerboats in the Delta that would have positive economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- Through the **Capital Outlay Program**, DBW can purchase property to develop boating facilities. This program provides boating facilities on State owned or controlled property, e.g., at State Parks and State Water Project reservoirs. In consideration of the extensive State owned property in the Delta, and the potential for future acquisitions, this program can play an important role in future development of boat launching ramps, restrooms, parking, lighting, landscaping, amenities, boater destination facilities, boat landings, and aquatic centers. A well-designed and operated aquatic center could significantly address both environmental and boating issues in the Delta. Education programs could train young and old alike how to boat safely and responsibly, as well as how to respect and care for the Delta's ecosystem.
- The **Public and Private Local Assistance Loan Programs** are available for the design and construction of public and private marinas, including berthing, gangways, piling, shoreline protection, breakwaters, parking, restrooms, buildings, and amenities. A number of privately owned marinas in the Delta have been built and/or expanded using the private loan program. Public loans have been used at Antioch and Pittsburg.

All of the above grant programs are available for future recreational boating facilities projects. The Department of Boating and Waterways is ready to cooperate with CALFED, sister State agencies, local governments, and the private sector in the joint planning, funding, development, operation, and maintenance of Delta recreational boating facilities.

Possible Opportunities for Recreation and Public Access as Part of CALFED

In light of the recreational needs identified through surveys, opportunities to address deficiencies in Delta recreation facilities have been examined. An ad hoc group of persons with recreation and boating interests, called the Delta Recreation Ad Hoc Committee, prepared ideas of opportunities for enhancing recreation in the Delta, including:

- Providing bicycling and hiking paths atop the levees on publicly-owned tracts/islands.
- Restoring and designing existing and new levees to accommodate vehicular access and parking for shoreline fishing, boat launching, swimming, hiking, bicycling, and wildlife viewing.

- Acquiring and protecting open space recreation areas through the purchase of trail rights-of-way or recreational easements.
- Developing boater destination facilities, including: boat-in campgrounds; day-use areas; beaches; and special event areas for tournaments, races, social gatherings, and celebrations such as 4th of July fireworks events.

Opportunities within the CALFED Program, in partnership with other State, federal, and local agencies, include:

Public Restrooms and Sewage Pump-out Facilities. The provision of more public restrooms and pump-out facilities would help CALFED address its goal of continuous improvement in water quality under its Water Quality Program, in that it could help reduce the disposal of polluted wastewater and sewage into the Delta's waterways.

Swimming Beaches and Shoreline Access. The lack of public access to the shorelines of Delta waterways could be addressed in CALFED's Long-Term Levee Protection Plan. Through the purchase of easements or rights-of-way, public access to shoreline areas from land or water for swimming, boating, and fishing activities could be provided.

Bicycle and Hiking Trails. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently submitted to CALFED a proposal requesting funding to explore the development of bicycling and hiking trails along the levees of the Sacramento Deep Water Ship Channel. For many restoration projects funded under CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program, there are similar opportunities to provide recreational facilities that are currently lacking. The development of bicycling and hiking trails atop the Delta's levees could also be addressed by CALFED's Long-Term Levee Protection Plan, through the purchase of easements or rights-of-way allowing public access to levees when land transfers into public ownership.

Hunting Areas. There is an identified need for public hunting areas. These activities could be provided, in designated areas, during hunting season, on public land managed for wildlife conservation purposes, and in new areas restored under CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program.

Non-Motorized Boating. Department of Boating and Waterways receives funding for a Boating Trails program, into which canoeing, kayaking, and public education are incorporated. CALFED could allow non-motorized boating access into its existing and new restoration projects.

Fishing Piers / Other Fishing Access, Fish Cleaning Stations, and Courtesy Docks. Piers and docks could be constructed where they are easily accessible to the public, provide access to new areas made available for public use, and do not have an adverse impact on floodflows.

Boater Destination Facilities. It is evident in the Delta that boaters want places to go in their boats. They do not spend all of their boating time cruising, skiing, and fishing. There is a demonstrated need for campgrounds, beaches, day use areas, public landings (overnight use), and special use areas.

Mitigation of Lost Boating Facilities and Activities. In the event that certain boating facilities and/or boating activities are diminished or eliminated on either a short-term or permanent basis, possible mitigation measures could include alternative marina and launching facility sites, special use areas for personal watercraft, water-ski zones, and special event areas. Also to be considered is the strong possibility of increased demand on existing boating facilities. If activities are eliminated in one area, boat traffic and facility use will surely increase elsewhere. The increased demands on operation and maintenance must be addressed in any proposed mitigation measures. A clear example of such a case is the potential for significant boating activities at State Park facilities at Brannan Island and The Meadows Delta Park.

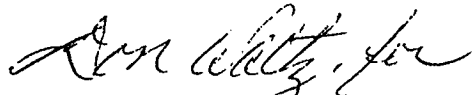
Summary

We appreciate the opportunity to actively review and participate in the development of the CALFED Program, and hope that these comments will be useful to you and your staff. Your consideration of these matters is important to the overall success of the CALFED Program. If you have any questions or comments on the matters presented in this letter, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,



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